

THE MUSICAL MAGAZINE.

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BIOGRAPHY.

HENRY VIEUXTEMPS.

[TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN.]

HENRY VIEUXTEMPS is, among the younger virtuosos on the violin of the present time, undoubtedly one of the most prominent. He was born in 1820, at Verviers, and showed already in early childhood, extraordinary talent for music. He found out melodies on toy fiddles bought for him at fairs at the age of seven years, without any instruction, and when any of his family sang a new song, it took him but a few moments to play the melody on his fiddle. When his father once forbade him the dreadful scraping on these fiddles, he answered, "Only give me a better instrument, and I will produce better tones, and such as you will like." This confident answer produced the desired effect, and the boy received a better instrument. His progress was now astonishing. His tones were not only sonorous and fluent, but also pure. The little untutored virtuoso, reaped the admiration of connoisseurs, and his avocation for the art being thus decidedly apparent, it became the duty of his parents, to procure him the necessary instruction and a careful education for it. The violin was his favorite instrument, and his parents entrusted him to the great Beriot, who was just then travelling through the Netherlands, and sojourning for some time in Verviers.

It was a very fortunate circumstance for Vieuxtemps, that he thus made from the very beginning, a most excellent study, a fortune that but few can boast of. How many fine talents, that nature has most richly endowed, and who go to work with their whole soul, fade, nevertheless, when they hardly had begun to develop, for want of proper directions and instructions! Vieuxtemps was doubly fortunate, inasmuch as his master, De Beriot, took the greatest pains to give to the little virtuoso in his charge a complete education. He never has taken so much care of any other pupil; and the perseverance with which he gave his instructions to him, was really admirable, especially since he had to begin with the first elements of music, which, generally, these great masters find too tedious to meddle with. Beriot reaped, however, the most gratifying reward for his labors, for Vieuxtemps grew up, not only to a lively and fine young man, but also to be one of the most powerful and talented artists. Beriot brought him in his twelfth year, for the first time, before the public. We believe it was in Paris. He received the most rapturous applause. Before he had completed his thirteenth year, he had played in public with the most brilliant success in his native country, especially in Brussels, and went on a journey to Germany. In 1833, he played in Vienna. The extraordinary proficiency which he developed, the fulness of his tone, the power, certainty, and elegance of his playing, the exquisite bowing and the eminent pureness, all these qualities excited, contrasted to the extreme youth of the performer, such an enthusiasm among the music-loving Vienna people, that he was universally pronounced a phenomenon of art, and even men of the profession called him a perfect master. Mayseder laid before him a composition of his own in manuscript, and the little Vieuxtemps played it charmingly at sight. He studied the violin concerto of Beethoven for a public concert within forty-eight hours. No wonder that he was, even at this time, placed without hesitation by the side of a Lafont, Lipinski, and Kreutzer.

However all these triumphs, these excitements could only justify the public to hope much of him; for, on calm reflection, they must be aware, that, however wonderful technical proficiency the boy of twelve or thirteen years developed, he was a boy and necessarily had not that manly depth and gravity which is necessary rigorously to penetrate into the depths of art and of works of the art, and without which we therefore cannot call the education of an artist completed, unless nature should herself have overturned her own regula-

tions and order, and Psyche should have, in the artist's talents, much overreached Physis, whom she has bound and habituated to steady, regular steps. That this was not the case with Vieuxtemps, we can decidedly affirm, and we are rejoiced at it, for however extraordinary phenomena nature has presented to man, she never allowed a violation of her laws to go unpunished. Those infant wonders, that music like other arts has produced, have but a very ephemeral life.

It was very natural that Vieuxtemps should excite already at that time, great astonishment in every respect; but it gave only the greatest hopes; and these hopes have been fulfilled to their widest extent. He remained several months in Vienna, from whence he went to Dresden, Leipzig, Berlin, &c., and at last, in 1835, to Russia. In the following year, 1836, he returned to Vienna. He was only three years older now, but attentive observers noticed a material difference between his present and former performances. He gave proof that he now began to be, what, in their enthusiasm, the Vienna amateurs had called him already three years ago, a perfect master. In composition too, he had made considerable progress in the mean time. He played a concerto of his own composition with extraordinary success, surmounting the greatest difficulties with a truly wonderful ease. He had taken a fancy to Vienna, and left it only towards the close of 1837 for his home.

Vieuxtemps is a young artist, richly gifted by nature, and highly cultivated and refined by a careful education, and by great industry and perseverance, and his zeal and high view of his art give hope to see him at the head of the violin virtuosos of the present century. His performance is not merely the common bravura style, but it is truly grand, combining with it in beautiful contrast, a sweet elegance, charming gracefulness, and great depth of feeling. We have heard him play in a private party, Pechatschek's Variations on Beethoven's Waltz, with its imposing introduction, progressing in chords of three and four parts, and we must confess, we have never heard anything more beautiful, original, and truly great. We will not place Vieuxtemps above Lipinski, but most certainly immediately after him. If we take Spohr's fame as a virtuoso, as belonging to a past period, we must call Lipinsky, Molique and Vieuxtemps the greatest violin virtuosos of the present time. They belong too, as regards their style of playing, pretty much to the same category. Lafont is already beyond his greatest period, and Beriot stands by many peculiarities, as it were, by himself. He is not so universally great in everything as these three masters.

We should be very glad, if, henceforth, Vieuxtemps should find time and inclination to devote himself to composition, and to the necessary studies for it.

ORATORIO OF MOUNT SINAI, MUSICAL TASTE, ETC.

Under the above head, we found in last Saturday's Evening Gazette an article, which, although written in an exaggeratedly severe style, and intermixed with too pointed personalities, contains very correct and true views, forcibly represented, and which cannot be too often repeated and impressed upon our musical public. We make, therefore, some extracts.

" We are fully aware of many of the difficulties in the way of such performances. Among them, and there is no need of mincing the matter, for it is acknowledged by the members themselves, is the dislike of control, an unwillingness to be taught, to submit to the judgment of another, even to one placed at the head of the Society by their own choice, and from a reliance upon his universally acknowledged science, taste and great success in teaching. Another difficulty is the distaste for private practice; not the practice of solo parts, but of those for several performers. All the practice of parts for several voices or instruments, is, we imagine, confined to the meetings of the whole body of members, and here the impatience of restraint, and the delicacy of the President, must leave many imperfections unnoticed and not corrected, while in private all these might be remedied. Nor should we overlook the unfortunate fact, that the followers of the divine art are notoriously the most inharmonious people in the world; and until all are deeply imbued with a sense of the beautiful and sublime in music, and divested of selfishness and the overweening estimate of their own powers, we cannot hope for a perfect performance.

" The training of a large number of performers, and the preparation for a correct performance of an Oratorio, is by no means an easy matter. In superintending a rehearsal at Bologna, the famous Crescentini's ear caught in an instant the slightest defect of intonation in any of the voices; the slightest excess of disproportionate *piano* or *forte*, the slightest attempt at any embellishment, even an *appoggiatura*. He stopped the whole performers immediately, pointed out the

fault, and made them repeat the music over and over again till he was satisfied. This was the true way to train a perfect choral band. But it will be long before we can hope for such results here, or that such training will be submitted to.

"There is no more prevalent error among our singers than the neglect of the *true* compass of their voices, and of the management of them. Girls must now be screaming far beyond the compass of their true and natural voices. Without considering that a voice like that of a Malibran or a Sontag, is not vouchsafed to all, Miss must be taught to sing by any foreign pretender that may be 'the fashion,' and who will modestly profess to make them 'execute.' We know some clever and conscientious teachers who will not undertake to perform impossibilities. What is their reward? Their ignorant employers see no difficulties, and if the teacher honestly persist in his own safe and right course, he is dismissed as a person who 'does not know the *amazing powers of my daughter*,' and the poor girl is thrown into the hands of some quack-teacher of singing, who feels no scruples about the matter, and will not hesitate to *teach* his pupil *into a consumption*, if he only receive his money.

"So long as our people will be thus blind, and submit to be thus gulled and abused, so long shall we have little reason to boast of our musical taste or acquirements.

"Among the injurious influences upon our musical taste must be named the fashion of admiring and attempting to perform so much of the music of the present degenerate Italian school. The wonderful execution of a few gifted artistes, has given an unmerited popularity to insipid and meagre compositions, and they come to us with all the glitter and glare which has been thrown around them by the florid and brilliant performances of a Malibran or a Grisi. Our fair singers do not consider, do not know most commonly, that the charm of these pieces was in the gorgeous embellishments with which the rare voices and the thoroughly taught possessors of them, enveloped the tasteless music, and which they cannot imitate without making themselves ridiculous. To cover an air with gaudy frippery, they have yet to learn, is a very different affair from the art of embellishing with chaste and elegant ornament. We have heard singers, who, with the most unblushing countenance, have interlarded even the sublime strains of Haydn with trills, and turns, and cadenzas, and this, with no greater knowledge of their art than what had been obtained by an imitation, and a snatched one too, of the delicate

ornaments of those, whose acquirements in the science and highly cultivated taste, authorized some occasional departure from the exact and pure style of the composer. We trust that the Handel and Haydn Society will never forget the influence it may and should exert upon the popular taste, and never countenance in their performances such attempts to *improve* upon the works of the great masters.

"There is another obstacle in the way of our advancement in musical taste, and that is, the railroad speed with which the science of music and the power of performance must be acquired to satisfy injudicious and ignorant parents and pupils. We are not, (with some few exceptions) aware of the impossibility of training, even a naturally good voice, without long and laborious study, and the daily practice of scales and exercises. After a few easy lessons, the pupil is too generally called out to entertain indulgent friends with a song; after some half dozen common ballads have been imperfectly learned, Miss must exert her powers in a bravura, and this accomplished, no matter how incorrectly, it meets with the applause of injudicious friends. Miss is now an 'accomplished singer,' and exercises and scales are thrown aside, as beneath her notice. She is told that all she wants is expression; she begins to shrug her shoulders, roll her eyes, and distort her features, and becomes 'full of expression.' Who can recall the placid countenance, or the joyous smile, the ease and grace of Caradori, even in her most effective passages, and look upon the glaring eye-balls, the agonizing distortions of our 'expressive' singers without disgust, or an overpowering sense of the ludicrous, to see a fair face writhing with the effort to squeeze out a note, and when it comes to have it cut like a two-edged sword, is rather beyond our powers of endurance. To hear the note too, for which the ear is prepared, come forth mingled with others, above or below it, and with which it should have no connection, is not less disgusting. The constant resort to the slide, or *portamento*,* now so common, is nauseating and destructive of all expression, and yet it is the resource of quack teachers who know not the proper method of cultivating the ear, and of giving to the voice the precision of an instrument. Unless otherwise set down by the composer, every note

* This is a popular English mistake—the slide is different from the portamento. For an explanation of the latter, see Magazine, vol. 1, page 71.—EDITOR.

should be given as distinctly and as firmly, as if struck upon an instrument. The constant practice of exercises can alone insure correct intonation, and the teacher who does not insist upon this, deserves no encouragement, and is unfit for his office. The abuse of the *portamento* is the most common vice of singers, and always evinces injudicious and imperfect instruction.

"The manner in which music is taught must obviously have a most important influence upon its advancement, and the acquisition of good taste. How many are the pupils of 'fashionable' teachers, who, when left to themselves, can accomplish the performance of a new song? How many can sing at sight? How many know any thing of time? We leave these questions to be answered by others."

These extracts speak for themselves, and we recommend them to the careful perusal of our readers.

There are only two suggestions of the writer with which we cannot agree; his preference of miscellaneous concerts, and his description of one of the greatest pleasures, which a real lover of music enjoys.

His regret that the Handel and Haydn Society "have felt compelled to yield so much to the prevailing taste, and to lay aside the sublime works of the great masters," is just; but giving a selection of solos, duets, and choruses, from the classics, instead of complete compositions, would be yielding as much to the want of power to fix their attention to one object, in the public mind. This unsteadiness, this craving merely after what is new, after change, should be checked instead of being fostered by concert givers, as well as by lecturers. If the first would not give us scraps of ten different compositions, instead of one entire in its unity; if the latter would not range over a great variety of topics, but confine themselves to a thorough investigation of one which they take in hand, we should soon learn to take hold with heart and mind; our intellectual and spiritual enjoyment would soon be enhanced, while now, in both cases, the intellect of the majority of the audiences is very little active.

A concert composed of songs, choruses, &c., taken from different greater compositions, might be compared to a lecture or recitation, composed of single scenes, from different plays. Could this be satisfactory, even if recited with great power and beauty? and especially where we are not intimately acquainted with the whole play? And why, then, should a musical scene taken out of its connection be

more satisfactory? Because we are too apt to look in music only for sounds, and not for the spirit which lives in them, and which speaks to us out of them.

This brings us to the second point; we think one of the greatest enjoyments, and the most intellectual, in music, is to follow the composer in his conception of the text, in his treatment of the whole as one work, in the one vein which must run through it in all the diversity of the single parts, in the unity which must mark it as one composition, while each single piece must keep sufficiently its own decided characteristics, not to make the whole monotonous. This, the identifying ourselves with the mind of the composer, the entering into his spirit, while we at the same time do not lose ourselves so wholly in it as to be unable fully and correctly to appreciate the beauties of his work, and the genius displayed in it, we consider as the highest enjoyment of the art.

Most certainly the reading of new works, "the tasting here, and the sipping there," is a great pleasure, but if too often enjoyed, it will too easily cause our intellect to fall asleep, and leave mere curiosity or physical pleasure at melodious sounds our only aids in the enjoyment of music. Skimming over a variety of works of literature, will too often deaden the intellect instead of sharpening it.

It may be objected that music is not meant for the intellect—it is not meant to represent or depict actions, but feelings, and that therefore in its enjoyment, also, the intellect has little to do, but only the soul, the feelings. This we would deny. Where music takes a definite form, where it is employed for a definite object, and this may be either instrumental or vocal music, it applies to both, our enjoyment of it is heightened by a distinct consciousness of its beauties, and which we cannot acquire without an active coöperation of our intellect.

FOR THE MUSICAL MAGAZINE.

On Saturday evening, November 14, the Boston Academy gave their first concert of the season, to the most numerous audience we have ever seen at their exhibitions; and we really believe that no audience has often been more richly rewarded for its attendance on similar concerts.

The orchestra is very efficient, and its component parts seem to us admirably proportioned. The stringed instruments were, in the main, managed judiciously, and we heard but little of that noise which often annoys us, especially in fortissimo passages, when the instruments, seemingly tortured beyond their power, scream out any thing but music. This urging of an instrument beyond its powers, is not particularly the fault of violinists; we know of a very eminent performer on the bass viol, whose enthusiasm often gets the better of his discretion, and so destroys the good effect of passages by producing, instead of full, sonorous tones, a series of cracking noises, more indicative of a vigorous arm than of good taste, or of a nice ear. Brass instruments are frequently blown beyond all hopes of music.

Like almost all yankees we have an especial fondness for the wood instruments, and those of the orchestra are charming; the first clarinet, for instance, is delicious, and so is the bassoon; and, generally, the first oboe is extremely pleasing; we wish, however, that the latter did not find it necessary to shy a difficult passage now and then; for, although it is better to shy it than to break down on it, the symmetry of the composition is marred. Will not perseverance conquer that passage in the *Cinderella* overture? It is so pleasant for an auditor to feel confident that he gets the whole of it!

Though not a great lover of brass in any shape, we cannot help acknowledging that the instruments of this metal in the Academy's orchestra were played with that tasteful forbearance as we have seldom heard. They are too apt to render themselves obtrusive, to the discomfiture of more modest instruments; but on Saturday evening each seemed to have said to its neighbors, "I will aggravate my voice so, that I will roar you as gently as any sucking dove; I will roar you an 'twere any nightingale." Even the "crack crack" of the trombone was less *cracky* than it is wont.

It was not to be expected that the orchestra, though composed of such excellent materials, would perform perfectly on their first appearance together, and doubtless there was less mellowness than is possible to be acquired, but this is a fault which will diminish the more the oftener the orchestra play together. We are a moderately good whig, and consequently not over fond of unconditional submission to any body, in authority or out of it, yet we wish that the members of all orchestras and choirs would so far forego their "inborn rights" of freedom and equality, as to render perfect obedience to

their leaders and conductors. We observed on Saturday evening a slight want of promptness and punctuality, especially in *staccato* passages, whose best effect can only be accomplished by *simultaneous* action, and this cannot take place without strict attention to the time and directions of the conductor. When there is but one short note for each instrument, the effect is false, of course, if, *after* the leader has given his, the rest *follow* on, follow they ever so quickly. This fault was rather conspicuous in the overture to *Masaniello*.

We think the public is much indebted to the Academy for their exertions in getting up so fine an orchestra, one capable of giving us the most classical specimens of instrumental music. People of all opinions respecting operatic exhibitions, can at least enjoy in common some of the finest opera music, which the prejudices of some might forbid their ever hearing, in consequence of the *Theatre* being the place where it is expected to be performed best.

The chorus singing of the choir was at first very good, but it dragged rather heavily through the "Harmony of the Spheres." There was an unusual lack of spirit in it.

The young lady who performed the solo part in the "Harmony of the Spheres," was a little too timid to do a sweet voice and good ear perfect justice. She evidently knew where to go, and made praiseworthy efforts to get there, but her timidity, ("a failing," by the way, which "leans to virtue's side,") exhibited by the novelty of her first appearance before so immense an audience, almost choked her, and caused more sympathy in us than was quite pleasant. We are, however, pretty confident of her future success, since her voice assured us of its power by pealing forth very beautifully and clearly when she felt that the chorus was withdrawing the general attention from herself.

Of the quartette that led in the so-called "National Anthem," we could not hear the two sopranos at all, the bass was a sort of voiceless buzz, and the tenor mingled up so much of good, bad and indifferent, that our opinion respecting him is "altogether dubious, if not doubtful." But there is one thing, respecting which our opinion is perfectly made up, and that is, the calling of the music of "God save the King," the acknowledged national air of England, and whose every association breathes of England, by the name of "America," and "National Anthem;" meaning by the latter the National Anthem of America. It would be difficult, indeed, for us to find superior music for our national anthems; but why should we

make fruitless attempts to steal from Old England her adopted and long cherished favorite? It seems to us in ratherish bad taste.

On Mr. Muller's performance of the "organ-piece," we refrain from making any comments, more from inability to criticise it, than from any want of pleasure in listening to it.

We remark, in conclusion, that the audience testified by their applause, more delight at the performances of The Rainers, who assisted on the occasion, than at all the other excellent things of the evening. The opinion of the Musical Magazine with regard to the merits of these pleasing singers, has been already expressed, and we believe correctly.

CONCERTS.

The whole musical life of last winter seemed to be compressed into the short space of a few weeks at the beginning, when Henry Russell succeeded in creating an excitement for concerts, which produced for the rest of the season a satiety, that made all the later offerings of musical entertainments unsuccessful. This winter has again opened with great musical excitement, but we hope the result will be different from that to which we have above referred; for while it then was *music*, that created the excitement with her usual caprice, it is *music* now; music in the most varied shapes, from the most artless music of nature to the most refined victories of art over nature, from the most simple song to the fullest orchestral overture; and we may reasonably hope, that the thousands, who now, attracted by its charms, throng the concert room, will, in the great variety offered to them, find that which shall draw them again and again to it; that they will unlearn to sit there *merely* as cold, heartless judges of the performances, but will learn to idealize in their own minds that which is given to them, to that which the composer meant, and thus let it influence their souls; then they will come again, and *then* will music have charms for them.

Then they will come and listen to our own performances, unaided by extraordinary attractions, in a liberal spirit, and not so utterly neglect them as is now so often done, and although they will exercise their judgment, they will rather enjoy what is good and encourage it, than condemn; our performers themselves will enter with more zeal upon their duties and the mutual reaction between audience and per-

formers will foster improvement and progress in the conception of our art; and extraordinary attractions being offered will serve as bright examples and stimulants for our own improvement, we shall better enter into the spirit of their excellencies and not merely imitate their external manners.

Critically to listen to the performances, to weigh their pretensions, to examine their merits, to unfold their imperfections, is our particular task, and a thankless one it is to ourselves, for while it checks and chains our imagination, it takes our intellect off from the composer and his work, and bends it entirely on what the performers make of it; may it not be altogether a useless one, but may it help to check vain pretension, to cheer honest faithful effort, and to appreciate true merit.

But it is time we should turn from our digression to our purpose, a report on the concerts of the past fortnight. It was a time rich in concerts and music, listened to by brilliant audiences.

Henry Russell tried his experiment of last winter with increased enterprize; the one whig song swelled out to a whig concert; just as in the music shops the solitary whig song had swelled out to a full volume of songs; and, *mirabile dictu*, the experiment succeeded to his heart's content; the house was crammed, for the concert was represented as *patriotic*, and he himself as *deserving gratitude* for his services in the cause! O, shame for the degradation, both of the holy cause of liberty and that of music! Shame, that the first should be abused so much for mere monetary speculations, and that the latter should be made to help spread foolish ridicule! The whole class of so called English comic songs, by the bye, contains, with very few exceptions, very little that is truly comic, either in words or in music.

The Boston Academy of Music has begun the series of concerts, of which we spoke in our last number. This series has been commenced upon a new plan, which puts the concerts of the Academy altogether upon a different footing from what we have formerly considered them. While we then looked upon them more in the light of exhibitions of the improvements of the choir in singing, they now enter more directly into their educational plans. They are intended to afford an opportunity to the people to hear good music, that will improve their taste, and in the execution of this plan, the Academy has shown good judgment and a generous liberality. And we cannot refrain here from pointing to the fact, that there is in the whole management of the government of the Academy, an evident thoughtfulness and life in entering upon new directions, in which to advance

the cause of music among us, and at the same time, great liberality in pursuing these directions, a readiness to enter upon them fully, without a narrow calculation as to their risk ; all of which gives an earnest of increasing life and usefulness when they shall be so supported by the public, that they can move freely and unembarrassed. Then, we trust, the Academy will turn their attention also to the minutiae of instruction, and insure to the people a foundation, not of correct elementary education only, but one full also of life and soul ; in the latter respect, improvements might be made in the instruction of its professors.

The price of these concerts is put so low, that it can be no obstacle to any one, while, at the same time, an efficient orchestra consisting of our best professors is engaged, in order to insure good music. Good judgment was shown in the first concerts by engaging the Rainers. We have already fully remarked upon their singing upon former occasions, and have said that they are the more interesting to us since their musical development has in all probability been similar to what it is generally with our singers. We expect that they have not received a careful training and cultivation of the voice, but have only been generally instructed in correctness as to the elements of music, rhythm, melody and dynamics ; but with the knowledge of these, assisted by a good musical ear acquired by beginning in early youth, they have been enabled to produce such charming effects. How has this been done ? Why, evidently by judiciously practising together, by good discipline among themselves, by always subordinating the individual voices to the whole, and therefore by constantly listening to the others and practising their best judgment in regard to their own singing. Now all this is just what the Academy wants to bring about by its own instructions ; it wants to make the people thus musical ; it has introduced instruction and practice in singing to early youth ; here is an example of what can be effected by it, and we consider it very judicious to bring this example before its audience.

We do not enter much into the particulars of the two concerts hitherto given ; the first being spoken of in a communication from a musical friend in another part of this number, and the second being mainly a repetition of the first. Among the overtures, that of the "Zauberfloete" by Mozart, although evincing the greatest beauty and originality in its conception, and the greatest art in its composition, pleased the least. The reason is, that in this master piece all the single parts are so nicely fitted to, and so intimately interwoven with each other, all the instruments are so obligato, that it requires

the greatest exactness, the nicest observance of all the shades of expression, the most perfect blending of the parts by all the players, to give it its full effect.

Neukomm's piece, "the Scene on the Lake," although very pleasing, is hardly fitted to the grandeur of the instrument for which it is composed. This imitative description is trifling with its vast powers, however sweet the melodies are. The execution of Mr. Muller pleased us very much; it was full of life, energy and distinctness. His accompaniment also of the Rainer's was neat and appropriate; here this light tinkling upon the upper notes is in its place; it suits the light, gay character of the music, while any full chorded accompaniment would disturb the effect.

The second concert was, on the whole, an improvement on the first, and especially the "Harmony of the Spheres" was better performed, and we trust, better understood by the audience. The violin solo by Mr. Schmidt suffered in effect from two causes, first, his instrument was insufficient for a concerto instrument, and second, Mr. Muller's accompaniment was too anxious; it wanted firmness and vigor, and it evidently seemed that both solo player and accompanist did not fully understand, but disconcerted each other.

The concert given to Mr. Isenbeck was a brilliant and gratifying affair, and the Rainers reaped the benefit of their generous assistance by having their own concert soon after filled by a fine house.

We have now to speak of Mr. Braham's appearance before us, introduced by the Handel and Haydn Society; and we find it rather a difficult task. Braham's vast musical powers have been acknowledged all over Europe. He has stood for a long time in the undisputed possession of musical superiority over all his rivals in England's metropolis, where such a vast collection of talent constantly concurs; and has been called, in his prime, by the most competent voices of Europe, its very first tenor singer. This fame attracted, on his first appearance, an immense audience. They seemed to come in the full expectation of finding all his powers unimpaired, of having his singing burst upon their ears like a new wonder; and when they perceived that there was no longer that youthful elasticity of tone, that his intonation was not always quite distinct and pure, when they found that the voice broke once or twice, when brought out in its full energy; when they saw that he sung with great exertion, they felt sorely disappointed; and, overlooking the great art which he certainly evinced, showed that disappointment by rather lame applause.

We must confess, that we shared in this disappointment, for we had not expected that Mr. Braham would pretend so much upon past fame, as he then appeared to us to do, unless driven to it by necessities which are not supposed to exist. We certainly found traces of the extraordinary vocal powers, for which he has been famed; we found much art; yet we could not but feel annoyed at the occasional failings of nature, which we thought the art of the singer might have foreseen and avoided. Besides, our German taste could not accommodate itself to his ultra English style, with overloaded embellishments, which obscured the clear progress of the air, especially the cadences, often protracted beyond a just measure, and to the forced effects pushed on single notes with too great distinctness, often entirely substituting the dramatic for the musical effect.

Such was our first impression on Friday night. We heard him again at his second concert on Sunday night. He had recovered from a cold, and the embarrassment of a first appearance before a strange audience; and we had made up our mind not to be ruffled by his superfluity of ornament in our enjoyment of what is really beautiful in his singing—his energy and truth of expression. Our enjoyment of the concert was much more unalloyed, and we fully appreciated his “*Comfort ye my people* ;” “*He shall break them* ;” “*Behold and see* ;” in the *Messiah*, as gems of a truly poetic conception of truly great compositions. The recitative, “*Deep and deeper still*,” was thrillingly performed, together with the sweet air, “*Waft her, angels*,” which he surrounds with rich, but very tasteful embellishments.

In the third concert he entered a new field, that of secular music, repeating only that exquisite song of Knight’s, “*Rocked in the cradle of the deep*,” in which that beautiful air, with its gentle and pacifying accompaniment, are so appropriately blended together. The air from “*Der Freyschutz*” we must call a failure; but more from his adopted style being entirely unsuited to such opera music, than from any fault peculiar to the singer. The Scotch air, *Kelvin Grove*, though not developing that full nationality in its style of singing, was delicately sung, and the “*Bay of Biscay*” was full of life.

Mr. Braham’s voice, although of course without the freshness of youth, and although it has lost some of its upper notes, has yet preserved a pliability and energy, which is wonderful, considering his age, and which can only be ascribed to a careful preservation of his health, and to his perfect and continued studies. His greatest excellence, in our opinion, is the varied and appropriate effect which he gives to the expression of the text. Every sentence is studied, and the meaning given in the music; for which the high cultivation of his voice, which puts it at his command, even to rendering the nicest diversities of expression, gives him the means. His greatest fault is the overloading with embellishments, which makes his singing rather too free from the restraints of time, and especially his protracted

cadences, which are, moreover, often unsuccessful, and in bad taste, although his shake is beautiful; also, his sudden effects upon single notes; so the startling cry in "He shall *dash* them to pieces." This is rather too verbal an interpretation of a single word, yet it might pass as a vigorous illustration of anger, in accordance with the text from the Old Testament, where this passion is everywhere attributed to the deity; but we know not how to explain the great force put upon the word "immortality," in Knight's song.

His style we would not recommend as one that should be imitated; for his great art alone makes these embellishments tolerable; yet if our singers would learn from him that it is not sufficient to sing the notes of a song correctly, nor to observe the pianos and fortes as indicated, nor even to preserve the general style of the song, simple, energetic, gentle, or vigorous; but that the text should be carefully studied, and each single sentence receive its appropriate expression, they would learn a good lesson. Yet let them consider that they can only hope to profit by this lesson, when they bring their voice by a careful, judicious and vigorous training, through scales and exercises, completely under their command.

We cannot conclude our notice of Mr. Braham's concerts, without saying a word for Mrs. Franklin. She has sung in all of them better than we have heard her before, and what pleased us particularly, was, that she curtailed her usual cadences. The orchestra on Sunday night did not play so well as we could wish, partly from want of unity in the direction, and partly from want of prompt attention among the members.

We commend the Handel and Haydn Society for their enterprise in engaging Mr. Braham. We have long ago thought that a society with their means should as much as possible engage for their solo parts the best talent that can be had in the country, instead of being satisfied with the well meant, but often insufficient performances of amateurs. The society might give a few less concerts, and a few more rehearsals, and gain in the sterling value of their performances, and in their general credit and usefulness. We cannot, however, so unqualifiedly extend our commendation to a reengagement of Mr. Braham's services for *secular* concerts. The basis of the society is *sacred* music; its object improvement in it; giving *secular* concerts, therefore, is going out of its sphere, however acceptable it might be to the public to hear Mr. Braham in such music.

We have received and perused with much interest, notices of the performance of "David," by the Troy Academy of Music, in Troy, N. Y., which has been highly commended to us. It is to us one of the encouraging signs of the times, that we hear of such greater enterprises being successfully achieved in our minor cities, and the performance above mentioned augurs well for the musical taste in Troy.